

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

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AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

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UNCLAS CAPE TOWN 0061

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TAGS :PINT,PDEV,RH

SUBJ :RHODESIAN VIEWS ON MAJORITY RULE

REF :CAPE TOWN 0044

1. RHODESIAN PRIME MINISTER IAN SMITH, SPEAKING NEAR SALISBURY JANUARY 15, SAID HE THOUGHT CHANCES OF SUCCESS IN SETTLEMENT ATTEMPTS WERE 'SLIM', AND THAT THERE WAS 'YAWNING CHASM' BETWEEN HIS GOVT AND AFRICAN NATIONALISTS ON QUESTION OF MAJORITY RULE. SMITH SAID HE HOPED HIS ASSESSMENT WRONG AND THAT GOVT PREPARED TO CONTINUE EFFORTS TOWARD SETTLEMENT.

2. ANALYSIS OF RHODESIAN POLICY BY SOUTH AFRICAN AFRIKAANS PRESS (REFTEL) WAS STRONGLY ATTACKED BY SMITH. HE SAID IT HAS NEVER BEEN HIS GOVT'S POLICY TO TURN COUNTRY OVER TO BLACK MAJORITY RULE. RHODESIA HAD ALWAYS HAD CONSTITUTION
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WHICH ENSURE GOVERNMENT BY THE MAJORITY ON THOSE ELIGIBLE

TO VOTE UNDER CONDITIONS LAID DOWN,' AND THIS MEANT THERE WOULD BE 'RESPONSIBLE MAJORITY GOVERNMENT,NOT IRRESPONSIBLE MAJORITY GOVERNMENT.' SMITH SAID PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THIS WAS PRESERVATION OF CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION, AND THAT THIS 'CORRESPONDS TO PHILOSOPHY OF SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT.'

3. QUESTION OF MAJORITY RULE ALSO ADDRESSED BY DES FROST, CHAIRMAN OF THE RULING RHODESIAN FRONT (RF). IN JAN 15 INTERVIEW IN PRETORIA NEWSPAPER,FROST SAID BLACK MAJORITY RULE IN RHODESIA WAS IMPOSSIBLE. HE SAID THIS WAS HIS FINAL VIEW AND THAT IT NOW UP TO BLACKS TO MAKE CONCESSIONS.

4. IN INTERVIEW REPORTED BY ARGUS AFRICA NEWS SERVICE JAN 16. DR.EDISON SITHOLE, PUBLICITY SECRETARY OF AFRICAN NATIONAL COUNCIL (ANC). SAID HE WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT SETTLEMENT BECAUSE 'THE WHITE MAN SEEMS DETERMINED TO CLING TO MINORITY RULE WHILE THE AFRICAN IS FIRMLY DEMANDING MAJORITY RULE.' SITHOLE SAID RHODESIAN GOVT MUST BE PREPARED TO MAKE CONCESSIONS, BUT THAT BLACK MAJORITY RULE REMAINED FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF ANC.

5. COMMENT: MANY OBSERVERS FEEL THAT DIVERGENT STANDS ADOPTED BY TWO SIDES ARE PRELIMINARY AMNEUVERINGS DESIGNED TO ESTABLISH POSITION OF STRENGTH FROM WHICH TO PROCEED IN SETTLEMENT TALKS. WHILE SMITH HAS SAID THAT HE WILL NOT TURN RHODESIA OVER TO BLACK MAJORITY RULE, HIS REFERENCE TO 'RESPONSIBLE' MAJORITY RULE ALLOWS FOR LIMITED BLACK PARTICIPATION. IN CURRENT RF LEXICON'RESPONSIBLE'PROBABLY STILL TRANSLATES AS 'WHITE' BUT WAY OPEN FOR NEGOTIATIONS OVER FORMULA AND TIMETABLE BY WHICH BLACKS WILL BE BROUGHT INTO GOVERNMENT. AND ALTHOUGH AFRICAN NATIONALISTS REMAIN INSISTENT ON BLACK MAJORITY RULE, THEY HAVE NOT SPELLED OUT METHOD AND TIMING OF TRANSITION. KEY QUESTION REMAINS WHETHER THERE IS MIDDLE POSITION WHICH WILL BE MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE AND WHICH CAN BE WORKED OUT ONCE ACTUAL SETTLEMENT NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN.

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